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C O N F I D E N T I A L DJIBOUTI 000997

DEPARTMENT FOR AF/E
CJTF-HOA FOR POLAD

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SUBJECT: SOMALILAND FM ON WARMING RELATIONS WITH DJIBOUTI

REF: NAIROBI 2718

Classified By: Ambassador James C. Swan for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Ambassador met December 11 with Somaliland Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdillahi Mohamed Duale to discuss recent improvements in relations between Djibouti and Somaliland, which had been strained since the GODJ's closure of Somaliland's trade mission in Djibouti in 2006. Duale reported that "things were moving in the right direction," although press reports that a new Somaliland mission might open as early as this month are likely premature. Duale reported that he had held a series of fruitful meetings with the GODJ Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Finance, and the Governor of the Central Bank. Duale said that Somaliland and the GODJ had agreed to establish a joint Ministerial Commission, slated to meet every six months in alternating capitals, as well as a technical-level committee to meet more frequently. In addition, Duale said that Djibouti's Banque pour le Commerce et l'Industrie (BCI), in which the GODJ holds a 33% share, had "already made a decision" to establish a branch office in Hargeisa. Duale said that he planned to meet again with Djibouti's Minister of Finance to set a more exact timetable for BCI's opening in Somaliland.

¶2. (C) During the meeting, Duale reiterated reftel points that he was looking forward to the "imminent" completion of AU Special Envoy Bwakira's report on his assessment mission to Somaliland, and to his own upcoming series of meetings in Addis Ababa with the AU and GOE to press for formal recognition. Duale added that Somaliland President Riyale is planning to travel to Addis and possibly Kigali to rally support. Duale also repeated reftel appeal for enhanced U.S.-Somaliland cooperation on counterterrorism.

¶3. (C) COMMENT. Djibouti-Somaliland relations appear on the mend. Somaliland reportedly offered livestock and other food to the GODJ in the aftermath of the Eritrean incursion in June. Duale commented favorably on President Ismail Omar Guelleh's immediate and personal concern over the October 29 bombing in Hargeisa. Duale was well-received at senior levels in Djibouti and confirmed he plans further follow-up visits. END COMMENT.

SWAN